NATION

CBSE says 40K students completed re-evaluation

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BUSINESS

Govt debunks reports of RBI selling gold worth $12B

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SPORTS

French Open: Shnaider knocks out World No. 1 Sabalenka

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 4 JUNE 2026 | THURSDAY | BENGALURU | 17 DHU'L-HIJJAH 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 143 | Pages: 8

After 40 yrs in politics, DKS sits on CM chair

Siddaramaiah's son, 11 ministers of previous govt now part of new Cabinet

Parameshwara named DyCM; BK Hariprasad is KPCC Chief

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Nearly four decades after he first entered politics as a student activist in Kanakapura, DK Shivakumar's long-held dream of becoming Karnataka Chief Minister finally came true. At 4.15 pm on Wednesday, he took oath as the State's 25th Chief Minister at the Glass House in Raj Bhavan, capping a political journey marked by turbulence, triumphs and unwavering loyalty to Congress.

From electoral victories and power struggles to jail terms, Shivakumar's rise has been anything but conventional. His ascent to the top office is the culmination of a relentless pursuit of power by a leader who refused to fade, even in the face of repeated setbacks.

Holding a copy of the Constitution, Shivakumar took oath in the name of late seer Gangadhara Ajjayya, blending constitutional symbolism with personal faith during the ceremony held at Lok Bhavan in Bengaluru. Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot administered the oath.

Former Home Minister G Parameshwara was sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister, invoking BR Ambedkar.

The ceremony featured a rendition of "Vande Mataram" and symbolised a carefully managed transition within the Congress. Shivakumar shared the stage with outgoing chief minister Siddaramaiah, ending months of speculation over a leadership change.

Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah, 11 ministers of previous government are now part of new the Cabinet

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, chief ministers from Congress-ruled states and senior party functionaries attended the event.

With Rs 1,413 cr, DKS is India's richest CM

In a move seen as balancing competing power centres, Congress appointed Siddaramaiah to its Congress Working Committee on the eve of the swearing-in. The leadership transition stems from an informal power-sharing arrangement reportedly worked out after the party's 2023 Assembly election victory.

One of the most talked-about moments of the day was a warm embrace between Rahul Gandhi and Shivakumar shortly after the oath-taking.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the new chief minister and assured cooperation between the Centre and the State government. Opposition leaders, including Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka, also extended greetings to Shivakumar while launching a sharp attack on the Congress government's record. Ashoka said Shivakumar was inheriting the consequences of three years marked by corruption, transfer rackets, a commission culture and administrative failures.

The event drew 2,000 guests, including Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy and Rajya Sabha MP Sudha Murty, former cricketers Anil Kumble, Mohammed Azharuddin and Venkatesh Prasad, religious heads led by Nirmalanandanatha Swami. Meawhile, Congress appointed senior leader BK Hariprasad as President of its Karnataka unit. Shivakumar appointed retired IAS officer LK Atheeq as Financial Adviser to the Chief Minister —*Salar News*

>>>*More on Pages 2 & 3*

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot administers the oath of office to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during the swearing-in ceremony of the new government in Bengaluru. Shivakumar arrives to assume charge as Chief Minister and bows on the steps of Vidhana Soudha as a mark of respect —MOHAMMED ASAD

DKS unveils free bus passes for all students

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Hours after taking oath, DK. Shivakumar on Wednesday announced a series of youth-focused measures, including free bus passes for all school and college students.

Free bus passes for students

At his first Cabinet meeting, Shivakumar approved free bus passes for all students across the state, expanding a transport benefit that had previously been available only to girls.

"This is the youth era. Students were asking why free bus travel was limited to girls," he said.

Youth employment and Bharat Jodo clubs

Emphasising youth empowerment, Shivakumar urged unemployed people to register with the government for jobs. He said the state would engage with companies and facilitate employment opportunities through a proposed private employment exchange.

The government also decided to establish 10,000 Bharat Jodo Youth Clubs across villages. Each club will receive Rs 10 lakh in assistance to promote constructive activities and discourage youth from falling into harmful habits.

MEET DKS' A-TEAM

- G Parameshwar
- KH Muniyappa
- KJ George
- MB Patil
- Ramalinga Reddy
- Sathish Jarkiholi
- Krishna Byregowda
- Priyank Kharge
- UT Khader
- Eshwar Khandre
- Yathindra Siddaramaiah
- Byrathi Suresh
- Sharan Prakash Patil

Bengaluru roads and property reforms

He announced an additional Rs 2,000 crore for the repair of Bengaluru's roads, including those under the Greater Bengaluru Authority and BDA. He also announced that the B-Khata to A-Khata conversion scheme, previously limited to GBA areas, would be extended across State. Existing buildings on plots of up to 2,500 sq ft with deviations of up to 20% will be regularised under a one-time settlement scheme. —*Salar News*

People watch the ceremony on a screen in B'luru —MOHAMMED ASAD

CONG ANNOUNCES CANDIDATES FOR K'TAKA MLC POLLS

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Congress cleared the names of four as its candidates for the elections to the Karnataka Legislative Council.

BK Hariprasad, Tippannappa Kamaknoor, PV Mohan and Shivanna Mallvalli were declared as candidates for the Legislative Council elections on Wednesday.

"Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has approved the fielding of BK Hariprasad, Tippannappa Kamaknoor, PV Mohan and Shivanna Mallvalli as Congress candidates in the elections to the Legislative Council," a statement from the AICC general secretary, Organisation, KC Venugopal said.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) had announced elections to the Legislative Councils of Bihar and Karnataka. While elections will be held for 10 MLC seats in Bihar, polls will be held for seven MLC seats in Karnataka on 18 June.

The last date for filing of nominations is 8 June 8 and the last date for withdrawal of candidatures is 11 June. —*PTI*

TMC splits as expelled leader Ritabrata is made LoP

KOLKATA, 3 JUNE

TMC on Wednesday suffered the first split in its 28-year history after 58 rebel MLAs elected expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition and secured recognition from the Assembly Speaker, deepening the party's post-election turmoil.

The dramatic revolt, unfolding barely two months after TMC's crushing Assembly election defeat, exposed a widening rift between the party organisation and its legislators, raising questions over leadership, succession and the party's future direction.

Expelled TMC leader Ritabrata Banerjee addresses a press conference, at the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, in Kolkata —PTI

Adding to the party's troubles, senior leader Firhad Hakim will resign as Mayor of Kolkata after TMC chief Mamata Banerjee accepted his request to step down, party MLA Kunal Ghosh said. Hakim, a close aide of Banerjee, had earlier sought to resign, citing difficulties in functioning after the BJP came to power in the state. Though his request was initially declined, Banerjee accepted it after he renewed the plea on Wednesday. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 4*

21 killed in Delhi hotel fire, several foreigners among dead

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A massive fire broke out at a hotel in a congested bylane in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area on Wednesday, killing at least 21 people, including foreign nationals whose ailing relatives were being treated at nearby hospitals.

The blaze at Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani began around 8.30 am and spread rapidly through the five-floor narrow structure, catching occupants off guard. Rescue teams, assisted by locals, pulled out around 40 people and rushed them to hospitals, where 21 were declared brought dead. Several injured remain in critical condition, and officials fear the death toll may rise.

Police said the hotel had permission for only six rooms under the Delhi government's bed-and-breakfast policy but was operating 25 rooms, including in the basement. The building had only one entry and exit, and its fire NOC is under scrutiny.

The cause of the blaze is yet to be confirmed. Foreign nationals, mainly from Central Asian and African countries, were among the victims, many visiting relatives admitted at nearby Max Hospital.

An FIR under charges of culpable homicide has been registered.

Police sources said a blast-like sound was heard after the kitchen was switched on, following which flames engulfed the building within minutes. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 5*

The blaze at Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani began around 8.30 am and spread rapidly through the five-floor narrow structure on Wednesday—PTI

US proposes 12.5% tariffs on India over forced labour

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The US has proposed to impose 12.5 per cent tariffs on 54 countries, including India, for allegedly failing to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour, even as officials from New Delhi and Washington are currently holding three-day talks to finalise the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement. The talks that started on Tuesday are being held in New Delhi. Reacting to the proposed 12.5 per cent tariff, the Indian commerce ministry said New Delhi is engaged with the US on the two Section 301 investigations - over concerns related to forced labour and excess industrial capacity.

>>>MORE ON PAGE 6

FIGHTING RENEWS IN WEST ASIA

Indian killed in Iranian attack on Kuwait airport; Delhi fumes

DUBAI, 3 JUNE

An Indian national was killed and several others injured on Tuesday in an attack that targeted Kuwait International Airport, officials said. India on Wednesday condemned the attack and renewed calls for an end to violence against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The identity of the deceased Indian is not immediately known.

In a post on X, the Embassy of India in Kuwait said it is "closely coordinating" with the Kuwaiti authorities to help the bereaved family as well as those injured in the incident.

Kuwait also expressed its "deepest condolences at the tragic demise of an Indian national due to an attack on the airport in Kuwait today." Kuwaiti media said that the country has suspended air traffic from Wednesday until further notice.

This latest death brings the total number of Indian fatalities to at least 10 since hostilities broke out between Iran and the US on 28 February.

Meanwhile, an Air India Express aircraft bound for Kuwait returned to Kozhikode on Wednesday morning after the Gulf nation's airspace was closed, while another flight from Kochi to Bahrain was cancelled. Sources said he airline is likely to suspend its services to Kuwait till 6 June. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 6*

KNOW YOUR MINISTERS

KH MUNIYAPPA

Age: 78

Constituency: Devanahalli (SC)

Caste: Madiga (SC)

Previous post: Food and civil supplies minister (2023)

Kambadahalli Hanumappa Muniyappa is a powerful Madiga (SC) leader who represented Kolar for an impressive 28-years in seven consecutive terms between 1991 and 2019. After losing the seat in 2019, he contested from Devanahalli and became the food and civil supplies minister in the Siddaramaiah government. He was also a Union minister in the Manmohan Singh government, where he was the road, railways and MSME minister at different points between 2004 and 2014.
Muniyappa is known for being a prominent Dalit and SC leader, and a staunch advocate of internal reservation.

KJ GEORGE

Age: 76

Constituency: Sarvagnanagar

Caste: Christian

Previous post: Energy minister

Kelachandra Joseph George is one of the most senior political leaders in the Congress, entering the Youth Congress in 1968 and rising through the ranks in five decades. Originally from Kodagu, George is a prominent Christian leader and six-time MLA from Bharatinagar and Sarvagnanagar in Bengaluru. He has held dozens of prominent portfolios, serving as the B'luru dvpt minister in the S Bangarappa cabinet in the 1990s. However, his most controversial post came when he was the home minister in 2013. He was forced to quit after commenting that a gangrape can't be done by two people, and after DySP MK Ganapathy named him in his suicide note.

MB PATIL

Age: 61

Constituency: Babaleshwar

Caste: Lingayat

Previous post: Large & Medium Industries minister

Mallanagouda Basanagouda Patil is a force to be reckoned with in Vijayapura, where he is a five-time MLA from Babaleshwar.
A powerful Lingayat leader, Patil courted controversy by advocating for the community to be given a religious status separate from Hinduism.
This resurfaced during the recent socio-economic survey aka caste survey. Like many leaders from North Karnataka, Patil is vocal about irrigation issues there, having aggressively pushed forward the Upper Krishna Project when he was the irrigation minister between 2013-2018.

RAMALINGA REDDY

Age: 72

Constituency: BTM Layout

Caste: Reddy (OBC)

Previous post: Transport and Muzrai minister

The current Working President of the KPCC, Ramalinga Reddy is one of the most eminent politicians from South Bengaluru, having never lost an election since 1989. He represented Jayanagar between 1989 and 2004, before switching to BTM Layout and winning the polls between 2008-2023, serving as an MLA for eight consecutive turns. He is known for attempts to ease traffic bottlenecks such as the Silk Board junction. As the home minister, Reddy ordered an SIT into the Gauri Lankesh murder case. During the collapse of the Congress-JD(S) govt, Reddy resigned as an MLA, but not "from Congress". His political legacy includes his daughter Sowmya Reddy.

SATISH JARKIHOLI

Age: 64

Constituency: Yemakanmardi (ST)

Caste: Nayaka/Valmiki (ST)

Previous post: PWD minister

One of the most powerful leaders from Kittur Karnataka, Satish Jarkiholi is a mass AHINDA leader whose stature can often rival that of Siddaramaiah's.
Satish is part of the Jarkiholi family – one of the most influential and affluent political families in the State, despite being spread across party groups.
After entering public life in 1992 through the cooperative banking sector in Belagavi, Satish steadily transitioned into a formidable cabinet minister, and has already said he intends to become the CM face for the 2028 elections.

KRISHNA BYREGOWDA

Age: 53

Constituency: Byatarayanapura

Caste: Vokkaliga

Previous post: Revenue minister

The son of former agricultural minister C Byre Gowda, Krishna has represented the Byatarayanapura constituency in North Bengaluru for five consecutive terms since 2008. He had earlier won the 2003 bypolls for the Vemgal seat in Kolar district that was necessitated by his father's death, but shifted to Bengaluru because of his interest in urban development.
A technocrat leader, Krishna has been focused on digitising land records as the revenue minister in 2023 cabinet, having initiated the millet push when he was the agricultural minister in 2013.

Seers bless newly sworn-in Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at Vidhana Soudha, on Wednesday —PTI

Roads, water & 2028 polls: DKS has his work cut out for him

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Karnataka's new Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has his task cut out, having to navigate the Congress through a wave of anti-incumbency with an eye on the 2028 Assembly polls. Some of the challenges he faces are inherited, while others stem from his own tenure in government.

His first challenge is Cabinet formation. The government has inducted only 13 ministers in the first phase against the sanctioned strength of 34, including the Chief Minister. Shivakumar will have to navigate the caste tightrope while bearing in mind that a Vokkaliga leader has replaced an AHINDA (minorities, backward classes and Dalits) stalwart, potentially affecting voting patterns in 2028.

How Shivakumar acts on the socio-economic survey (caste survey), a hallmark project of Siddaramaiah's government, could make or break the Congress.

He must balance loyalists and Siddaramaiah supporters while inducting the remaining ministers. The absence of former housing minister Zameer Khan from the Cabinet after the alleged leak-call controversy over the Davangere South bypoll has already caused unease within the party.

Assigning portfolios is another challenge. Shivakumar held the crucial Bengaluru Development portfolio in the Siddaramaiah government and became the face of criticism over the City's crumbling infrastructure. Ministers Ramalinga Reddy and Krishna Byre Gowda, besides Shivakumar himself, are seen as contenders for the post.

One of Shivakumar's flagship initiatives was replacing the BBMP with the GBA. However, elections to the civic body have long been delayed.

His ambitious Brand Bengaluru proposals, including the twin tunnel road project, Peripheral Ring Road and Bidadi Integrated Township, have also drawn criticism.

Other issues include a looming agrarian crisis, monsoon variations and interstate water disputes. —*Agencies*

> **Sonia Gandhi spoke to me over the phone. She has a lot of trust in me since the beginning. She made me the party president (in the state). She wished me, and asked me to take everyone together. She has belief in me**
>
> DK Shivakumar, Chief Minister

> **The people of Karnataka placed their trust in us, and that trust remains our greatest responsibility... Warm congratulations to Shivakumar... and thanks to Siddaramaiah... The Congress' guarantees remain the foundation of our governance**
>
> Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

CM POST IS SACRED TRUST PLACED BY PEOPLE, SAYS SHIVAKUMAR

Shivakumar said that the position he holds is more than a Constitutional office. It is a "sacred trust placed in me by the people".

Shivakumar vowed to build a compassionate, equitable and prosperous Karnataka.

"A Karnataka that our future generations will inherit with pride and carry forward to even greater heights," he said. "We must harness the power of new ideas, technology and collective effort. In today's rapidly changing era of technology, we must take Karnataka to the pinnacle of development.

"Of the people, by the people, for the people," he added.

The mass leader now turns key strategist

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Few leaders in Karnataka politics have commanded affection across regions, classes and generations quite like Siddaramaiah. From a modest farming family in Siddaramanahundi village in Mysuru district, he rose through grit and intellect to become the longest-serving chief minister of Karnataka.

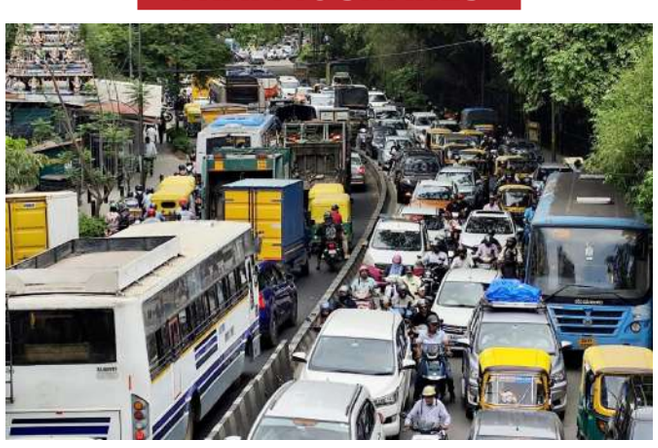
Siddaramaiah is now all set to be a member of the Congress Working Committee, the highest decision-making body in the party. Having stepped down as chief minister, he declined an offer for a national parliamentary role in the Rajya Sabha.

His focus will now shift towards strengthening the party's organisational network and preparing it for the 2028 Assembly elections. A major challenge before the Congress will be overcoming Karnataka's long-standing pattern of voters rejecting incumbent governments.

In that effort, Siddaramaiah is expected to work in tandem with DK Shivakumar, helping shape the party's electoral strategy and maintain its support base.

As Karnataka turns a new political page, Siddaramaiah leaves behind a legacy defined by mass appeal, social justice and populist programmes such as Anna Bhagya and Indira Canteen. —*Agencies*

TRAFFIC SNARLS



During the swearing-in ceremony, traffic came to a virtual standstill on Kasturba Road, near Vidhana Soudha, on Wednesday —MOHAMMED ASAD

BK HARIPRASAD IS THE NEW K'TAKA CONGRESS CHIEF

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Congress on Wednesday appointed senior leader BK Hariprasad as President of its Karnataka unit, succeeding DK Shivakumar, who stepped down after taking oath as Chief Minister.

A veteran Congress strategist, Hariprasad belongs to the Billava community, an Other Backward Class (OBC) group in Karnataka, and is known for championing social justice and backward class causes. He has served three terms in the Rajya Sabha representing Karnataka and is currently a Permanent Invitee to the Congress Working Committee. He also oversees party affairs in Haryana and has held organisational responsibilities in several states.

Meanwhile, in one of his first executive decisions as Chief Minister, Shivakumar appointed retired IAS officer LK Atheeq as Financial Adviser to the Chief Minister. Atheeq will also continue as Chairman of the Bengaluru Business Corridor and will enjoy salary and allowances equivalent to those of the Chief Secretary.

Atheeq had resigned as Additional Chief Secretary to then Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in June last year. Previously posted in the Finance Department, he played a key role in monitoring the implementation of the Congress government's five guarantee schemes.

Tushar Giri Nath has been appointed Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, while Rajendra Cholan P has been posted as Secretary to the Chief Minister with additional charge as MD of Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd. —*Salar News*

KNOW YOUR MINISTERS

PRIYANK KHARGE

Age: 47

Constituency: Chittapur (SC)

Caste: Holeya (SC/Dalit)

Previous post: Rural Development, Panchayat Raj, & IT/BT

The son of AICC President and political heavyweight Mallikarjun Kharge, Priyank has etched a name for himself having represented the Chittapur (SC) seat in Kalaburagi for three-terms. Priyank has broken away from the "Kharge Jr" tag through a media-savvy rhetoric, focus on start-up and technology cultures, and a fierce ideological stance against the RSS-BJP. The Dalit leader courted a storm when asking for RSS events to be banned in public spaces.
Simultaneously, Priyank, who became the youngest minister in Karnataka at the age of 38 in 2016, has channelled his Ambedkarite ideology to gain prominence at the rural and grassroots level.

UT KHADER

Age: 56

Constituency: Ullal

Caste: Beary Muslim

Previous post: Legislative Assembly Speaker

A five-time MLA from the coastal region, Khader is one of the Congress' most prominent Muslim leaders. The son of former minister UT Fareed, he is known for his cross-community appeal and strong grassroots connect in Dakshina Kannada. Trained a lawyer, he has built a reputation as an accessible leader. In 2023, he made history by becoming the first Muslim Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. In 2022, he also served as deputy leader of the Opposition. Earlier, he was health minister (2013–2018) and also handled food, civil supplies and consumer affairs in the Siddaramaiah government.

ESHWAR KHANDRE

Age: 64

Constituency: Bhalki

Caste: Lingayat

Previous post: Minister for Forest

A six-time MLA from Bhalki and one of Congress' most prominent Lingayat leaders, Khandre hails from a politically influential family in Kalyana Karnataka region.
The son of veteran Congress leader Bheemanna Khandre, he has built a strong base in Bidar. Known for his organisational skills and grassroots connect, he has played an important role in strengthening the party among Lingayats voters.
He is the Working KPCC President since 2018. In 2002, he and his brother Vijaykumar were accused in the murder of BJP worker Suresh Khed, but were subsequently granted bail.

YATHINDRA SIDDARAMAIAH

Age: 45

Constituency: Former MLA from Varuna

Caste: Kuruba

2023 post: MLC

A pathologist-turned-politician and son of ex-CM Siddaramaiah, Yathindra entered electoral politics in 2018 when he contested and won the Varuna in Mysuru. He served as MLA until 2023. In 2023, he vacated the Varuna seat to enable his father to contest from her and was later nominated to the Legislative Council.
Known for his low-profile and close engagement with party workers, Yathindra is viewed as a rising leader within Cong and the influential AHINDA coalition. The Siddaramaiah family continues to wield significant influence in Mysuru politics and has retained control of Varuna since 2008.

BYRATHI SURESH

Age: 53

Constituency: Hebbal (B'luru)

Caste: Kuruba

Previous post: Minister for Urban Development

A close Siddaramaiah confidant, Byrathi Suresh began his political career as an MLC in 2012 before winning the Hebbal Assembly seat in 2018. He is known for his focus on urban infrastructure and city planning. A businessman, landlord and agriculturist by profession, he is among Karnataka's wealthiest legislators, with declared assets worth over Rs 648 crore. He is widely recognised as an influential, grassroots organizational leader with a strong urban voting base in eastern Bengaluru. His wife, Byrathi Padmavati, also stepped briefly into politics when she contested from Hosakote during 2019 bypolls.

SHARAN PRAKASH PATIL

Age: 59

Constituency: Sedam (Kalaburagi)

Caste: Lingayat

Previous post: Medical Education and Skill Development

Hailing from a freedom fighter's family in Udagi village, the three-time MLA from Sedam holds an MD in Dermatology and practiced as a dermatologist before entering politics.
A prominent Congress leader from the Kalyana Karnataka region, he is known for pushing for regional development and often acts as the party's defender against Opposition.
Widely credited with establishing the Gulbarga Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS), he has driven the expansion of government medical colleges, rural healthcare and medical infrastructure through successive Siddaramaiah-led governments.

Celebrations galore after DK Shivakumar takes oath as the Chief Minister of Karnataka; Shivakumar takes the blessings of former CMs HD Deve Gowda and Yediyurappa; DKS with former CM Siddaramaiah and new Minister Yathindra Siddaramaiah —MOHAMMED ASAD

KANAKAPURA 'BANDE'

DK Shivakumar, dubbed as the Congress' 'Chanakya', is one of the most powerful political forces in Karnataka. Having won eight consecutive terms from Sathanur and Kanakapura, Shivakumar was labelled 'Kanakapura bande' (granite rock of Kanakapura) by the Opposition for large scale quarrying in the area. But the Vokkaliga leader turned that barb into a term of endearment, signifying his political reliability. Born on 15 May, 1962, in Dodda Alahalli village near Kanakapura town, here's how he rose to the CM's chair.

1980 Enters politics during his college years, having studied in RSS shakhas. He loses the Shantanur Assembly election in 1985 on a Congress ticket to JD(S) strongman HD Deve Gowda.

1989 Wins from Sathanur and enters the Karnataka Legislative Assembly for the first time at just age 27. Despite being a first time MLA, he was made the prisons minister in the S Bangarappa cabinet.

DKS with daughter Aisshwarya, Rahul Gandhi, wife Usha, and son Akash during his swearing in ceremony.

1993 Marries Usha. The couple goes on to have three children.

1994 Denied a Congress ticket, he contests from Sathanur on an Independent ticket and wins, signifying his political clout.

1999-2023 He defeats Deve Gowda's son HD Kumaraswamy in Sathanur on a Congress ticket and is made urban development minister in the SM Krishna government. He wins all the subsequent elections from Santhanur and Kanakapura, for a total of eight consecutive times and establishes himself as a dominant Congress Vokkaliga leader.

2014 Made energy minister in the Siddaramaiah-led govern ment.

2018 As irrigation minister, Shivakumar becomes the main strategist during the potential collapse of the JD(S)-Congress coalition government.

Arrested by the ED in a money-laundering case. He spends about 50 days in Delhi's Tihar Jail before securing bail.

2020 Appointed Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) President during the BJP's tenure in the State.

2020–2023 Rebuilds the party's organisation in Karnataka after the collapse of the Congress-JD(S) government and successive electoral defeats.

May 2023 Leads Congress to a landslide victory in the Karnataka Assembly elections, winning 134 of 224 seats.

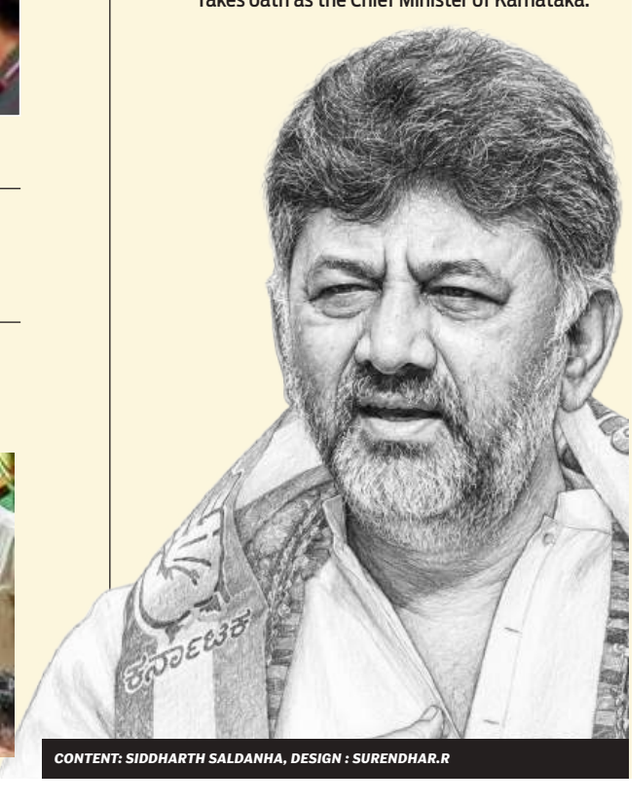
DKS runs with Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Bengaluru, 2023

May 2023 Appointed Deputy Chief Minister and given the Bengaluru Development and Water Resources portfolios. Reports suggest a power-sharing pact with Siddaramaiah but neither leader confirms it.

2024 Lok Sabha Elections – Helps improve Congress' Karnataka tally from 1 seat in 2019 to 9 seats in 2024.

June 2026 Elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party and chosen as the next Chief Minister.

3 June 2026 Takes oath as the Chief Minister of Karnataka.



CONTENT: SIDDHARTH SALDANHA, DESIGN : SURENDHAR.R

THE MEKEDATU YATRA: DKS' defining power move

The push for the Rs 9,000-crore Mekedatu balancing reservoir project marked a defining moment that cemented Shivakumar as a defiant leader in Karnataka politics. In 2022, despite Covid-19 curbs, he launched a 139km "Walk for Water" from Sangama, the confluence of the Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers, towards Bengaluru. Traversing the Vokkaliga heartland, including his home turf Kanakapura, the yatra mobilised strong regional support and expanded Congress's political footprint while weakening JD(S) influence, with Vokkaliga backing tilting significantly towards Congress in 2022.

Shivakumar argues that the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir is needed to meet the drinking water needs of Bengaluru, while Tamil Nadu argues that it will adversely impact lakhs of farmers in the Cauvery delta. The long stalled project appears to be gaining momentum with what Shivakumar hails as a pro-Karnataka verdict in the Supreme Court and announcing that Bhoomi-pooja for the mega dam will soon commence. —*Salar News*

SM Krishna's heir apparent and the Gandhis' prodigal child

Shivakumar has been a self-proclaimed Gandhi family loyalist. He often credits former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi for seeing the potential in him and playing a pivotal role in influencing his political path. Sonia Gandhi visited Shivakumar when he was jailed in Tihar, cementing the Kanakapura leader's status in the core of the Congress cadre.

Shivakumar credits Rahul Gandhi for expanding his ideology, and has said the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha would become the next prime minster. His alliance with Priyanka Gandhi Varda is often seen as the brains behind the Congress' operations, with reports suggesting that the latter pushed the High Command to ensure that Shivakumar does become the Chief Minister.

Shivakumar also credits the late former chief minister SM Krishna as his political mentor, with their bond often described as guru-shishya. Krishna, who is often credited with transforming Bengaluru into the IT capital of India, did so with Shivakumar as his urban development minister. This solidified Shivakumar's base in the capital, who continued the legacy by proposing tunnel roads, steel flyovers and elevated corridors in the City.

Additionally, the two come from the politically powerful Vokkaliga community. Their political camaraderie turned into a family affair when Shivakumar's eldest daughter Aisshwarya married Krishna's grandson (son of late Café Coffee Day founder VG Siddhartha) Amartya Hegde in 2021. Notably, this came despite Krishna leaving the Congress in the late 2010s, and shows the strength of the mentor-mentee bond.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar pays respect to his mother Gowramma on Wednesday before swearing in; file image with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan—MOHAMMED ASAD

CONGRESS' MAN FRIDAY

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar is considered one of the Congress' sharpest political stratergists —MOHAMMED ASAD

Shivakumar earned himself the reputation of "Congress' firefighter" through a history of deft political maneuverers that saved several governments from the brink of collapse.

In 2002, when then Maharashtra chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh's government faced a no-confidence motion, Shivakumar was deployed to save the Congress. The young minister invented what has since been termed "resort politics".

To prevent cross voting, Shivakumar discreetly moved Maharashtra Congress MLAs to the Golden Palms Resort on the outskirts of Bengaluru. He tightly guarded them for a week, and then flew them back to Mumbai on the day of the vote. Deshmukh survived, establishing Shivakumar's value to the central leadership.

And so, Shivakumar was asked to do it again in 2017 during the Rajya Sabha elections. He flew out some 44 Congress MLAs from Gujarat to Eagleton Golf Resort in Bengaluru to prevent the BJP from 'horse-trading'. Shiva kumar ensured Ahmed Patel's poll victory. But soon, he faced the fury of the Income Tax Department – which would later lead to his arrest by the ED.

In 2018, he repeated the feat during 'Operation Kamala' in Karnataka, when the BJP pursued deflections to bring down the Congress-JD(S) coalition government. He lodged MLAs from both parties in resorts and hotels to prevent cross-voting and then installed his bitter rival HD Kumaraswamy as the chief minister to preserve the Congress in the ruling coalition.

While the moves established Shivakumar as the Man Friday of the Congress, he was more than just a one-trick pony. In Himachal Pradesh in 2024, for instance, Shivakumar was forced to use a different strategy as six Congress MLAs cross voted during the Rajya Sabha polls, resulting in Abhishek Manu Singhvi's loss. While analysts predicted the collapse of the Congress government there, Shivakumar set up committees and organisational safeguards that prevented the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's government from collapse.

Most recently, several Congress MLAs from Odisha were lodged in hotels near Bengaluru in March 2026 ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls. Shivakumar, who was deputy chief minister at the time, denied any involvement.

However, Shivakumar's monumental record is not without its stains. He was made a poll observer for the 2026 Assam Assembly elections – a state where the party had little chance of winning. Two prominent Congress leaders ended up switching to the BJP.

—*Salar News*

— PTI

TVK allocates lone Rajya Sabha seat to Congress

CHENNAI, 3 JUNE

TVK chief C Joseph Vijay on Wednesday announced that his party would allocate the lone RS seat to Congress that felt vacant after AIADMK leader C Ve Shanmugam resigned from the RS. Shanmugam quit the seat following his victory from Mailam in the 23 April Assembly election. The election will be held on 18 June. Since TVK is the single largest party in the Assembly, its partner Congress is expected to comfortably win the RS seat. Election Commission sources said that the nominations began on 1 June and will go on till 8 June. The scrutiny of nominations would take place on 9 June. The last date of withdrawal will be on 11 June. The poll will be held on 18 June from 9am to 4pm and counting will begin the same date from 5pm. —PTI

AIADMK questions security protocols of Vijay's guards

CHENNAI, 3 JUNE

AIADMK leader IS Inbadurai on Wednesday questioned why Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay relies on private bodyguards despite already being under extensive multi-tier state security. The former MLA highlighted that the state government has already established a highly restricted official security ring, including a specialised "Core Cell," to safeguard the chief minister. The AIADMK leader questioned if this reliance implies a lack of complete faith on the CM's part in the security arrangements provided by the police department. Inbadurai asked whether allowing an individual who is not part of the government security apparatus to constantly shadow the CM as a "bodyguard" conforms to guidelines. —PTI

Coal block scam: Court summons Naveen Jindal

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A Delhi court has summoned industrialist Lok Sabha MP Naveen Jindal, former coal secretary PC Parekh and others after taking cognisance of a CBI chargesheet alleging irregularities in the allocation of Gare Palma IV/1 coal block in Chhattisgarh. "The chargesheet was filed by the CBI a decade after FIR registration," Special Judge Sunena Sharma said, adding that there is sufficient material to proceed in the matter. The court summoned on 17 July M/s Jindal Steel and Power Ltd, its MD Naveen Jindal, Parekh, Rakesh Kumar Jindal, Ram Kishore, SK Agarwal and Jindal Strips Ltd (now M/s Nalwa Sons —PTI

CJP names 3 new spokespersons ahead of protest

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Viral sensation, Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) announced the appointment of three spokespersons on Tuesday. The move to expand the party's reach ahead of a protest it proposed against failures in the education system, particularly the NEET controversy. Party founder Abhijeet Dipke named investigative journalist Saurav Das as chief spokesperson, with political researcher and filmmaker Vijeta Dahiya and former management consultant Ashutosh Ranka as public and media representatives. Das, known for reporting on legal, judicial, and social issues. Dahiya, a DTU graduate, has authored two books and written and directed Haryanvi films, besides producing research content for YouTube creators. Ranka is an IIT Kanpur and London School of Economics alumnus who previously worked with McKinsey & Company in London. —PTI

TMC SPLITS FOR THE FIRST TIME

58 rebel TMC MLAs back expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as LoP

KOLKATA, 3 JUNE

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) split for the first time in its 28-year history on Wednesday as 58 dissident Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) seized control of the party's legislature wing, elected expelled legislator Ritabrata Banerjee as its leader and secured recognition from the West Bengal Assembly Speaker Rathindra Bose. Banerjee said Bose had opened the office meant for the Leader of the Opposition for him.

However, in a significant political gesture, he urged the former chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee to serve as chief adviser to the newly constituted legislature team.

"We are the majority in the legislature party. According to parliamentary norms, we are the real and main opposition in the West Bengal Assembly," he said.

Banerjee further announced that a new leadership structure of the legislature party has already been submitted to the Speaker. Akhruzzaman had been appointed chief whip, while veteran legislators Javed Ahmed Khan, Sandipan Saha, Sabina Yasmin and Shiuli Saha would serve as deputy leaders.

No role for Abhishek Banerjee

At the same time, Banerjee indicated that the rebels did not recognise any role for TMC Member of Parliament (MP) Abhishek Banerjee, considered number 2 in the party organisational hierarchy, in the functioning of the legislature party.

The Mamata Banerjee camp had earlier dissolved all organisational committees of the TMC in West Bengal. The party said on X that it would undertake a "comprehensive exercise of introspection, performance review and organisational assessment at every level."

The party now faces an unprecedented challenge from within, setting the stage for a prolonged struggle over its political and organisational future.

Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday allowed Abhishek Banerjee to file a petition seeking protection from the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is probing allegations of forged signatures in the TMC's resolution for appointing MLA Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of the Opposition. It was Ritabrata Banerjee and fellow rebel MLA Sandipan Saha who first flagged the alleged irregularities before Assembly authorities. —PTI

Expelled TMC leader Ritabrata Banerjee (front row right), backed by dissident MLAs, addresses journalists at the WB Assembly in Kolkata —PTI

Mamata insulted Ambedkar, says BJP

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday accused former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of "insulting" BR Ambedkar after a video purportedly showed her paying floral tributes to him while wearing footwear. BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged that the TMC has repeatedly acted against Ambedkar's ideals and principles. He said the party also tried to introduce reservations for the Muslim community, and thereby insulted the constitution. —PTI

Bengal women to get Rs 3,000 monthly dole

The West Bengal government on Wednesday launched the Annapurna Yojana for women and announced that 28.25 lakh beneficiaries will receive Rs 3,000 monthly aid in the first phase. Inaugurating the scheme, CM Suvendu said that 28,25,769 verified beneficiaries had been enrolled on the dedicated portal in the last three days. "Prime Minister Modi's guarantee and the WB government's commitment have ensured that the promise to provide Rs 3,000 has been implemented," he said. He said the government would hold briefings every week to inform about the number of verified beneficiaries and newly enrolled recipients. —PTI

Kerala Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sunny Joseph —PTI

UDF politicking with staff transfers: LDF

T'PURAM, 3 JUNE

The Congress-led UDF government of Kerala rejected opposition claims of "politically driven" transfers of government employees, saying that they were done for administrative convenience.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sunny Joseph was responding on Wednesday, on behalf of Chief Minister VD Satheesan, to an adjournment notice moved by the opposition LDF to discuss the transfer of government employees, claiming that it was being done without any justification and violated rules.

CPI(M) MLA V Joy claimed that women and staff about to retire, cancer patients and class 4 employees were being transferred to far-off places and sought that the House business be adjourned to discuss the issue.

"207 orders have been issued by 33 departments transferring 1,952 employees, of which 310 are women, to far-off places," the CPI(M) MLA from Varkala contended.

The CPI(M) MLA alleged that the transfers were being carried out on demand by some government employees' associations, and the bureaucrats who issued the orders were appointed as they were close to ministers.

He also alleged that relatives were being appointed as personal staff of ministers.

Joy also claimed that the transfers made by the government have been stayed by the administrative tribunal.

Rejecting the opposition claims, Joseph contended that the transfers were being carried out as usual due to retirements and as per a 2017 GO.

He also said that anyone aggrieved by their transfer can approach the government.

Meanwhile, the Kerala Police have constituted a 30-member SIT to probe a case registered in connection with the attack on ED officials during a search at the residence of former chief minister Vijayan here. The order on SIT was issued by the T'puram Police Commissioner on 30 May. — PTI

CPI gen secy calls for meeting of Left parties

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

CPI General Secretary D Raja has written to the leaders of major Left parties, urging them to convene a meeting in New Delhi at the earliest to discuss the challenges confronting the Left movement and chart a common course of action, sources said on Wednesday.

Sources said Raja has written to the general secretaries of major Left parties - CPI-M's MA Baby, CPI(ML) Liberation's Dipankar Bhattacharya, Forward Bloc's G Devarajan and RSP's Manoj Bhattacharya - and a date for the meeting would be finalised soon.

An informal meeting of the leaders of the CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML) Liberation is likely to be held before that.

According to the sources, in his letter, Raja has said the country is passing through a "challenging political, economic and social situation", and noted that despite widespread concerns over unemployment, inflation, labour precarity and rising inequality, the Left have not been able to persuade people about the need for a Left alternative.

The initiative comes in the wake of the Left's setback in the Kerala Assembly polls, where the Congress-led UDF defeated the CPI(M)-led LDF. —PTI

Omar Abdullah, NC MLAs hold meet as LoP claims govt will fall

SRINAGAR, 3 JUNE

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday led his party MLAs and independents supporting him for a meeting at on off-site location amid claims by Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma that the National Conference government can fall anytime.

Sharma had claimed that several ruling party MLAs were on the verge of jumping ship.

Abdullah posted pictures of MLAs sharing a bus ride to the off-site location, most likely the Dachigam National Park.

The chief minister had convened a meeting at his residence to discuss the "matters of collective importance". However, as soon as the MLAs reached the residence, they boarded mini buses and were taken to Dachigam away from the media glare, sources said. "We are off for an off-site to spend the day taking stock of the last 19 months - the good, the not so good & everything in between," Abdullah said on X.

In another post, the CM said the meeting was not shifted at the last moment, but it was a pre-planned move.

Besides his party MLAs, Omar Abdullah also invited four independent MLAs who are supporting his government. —PTI

CM Omar Abdullah posted pictures of MLAs sharing a bus ride to the off-site location, most likely the Dachigam National Park—SCREENGRAB

'PVT SECTOR WIIL HAVE ROLE IN INDIA-US CIVIL N-DEAL'

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The US is looking to deepen civil nuclear cooperation with India and bring in private sector-led solutions to meet the country's growing power demand, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said at the 'Vision India 2047' CITI 2026 India event in Mumbai.

Addressing business leaders, Gor said the two countries are "pushing our Civil Nuclear sector partnership to new levels" and described the civil nuclear sector as a "very big growth area over the next few years." He noted that his mission recently hosted member companies of the US Nuclear Energy Institute in India "to share how a private sector-led civil nuclear industry can contribute to safe civil nuclear power meeting India's power needs.

According to Gor, the focus of the collaboration is on leveraging private sector capabilities to expand India's nuclear capacity. The ambassador stressed that such investments will require support from the financial services sector and American businesses, framing it as a "win-win situation" for both economies. —ANI

Nepal, an important partner: PM

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Prime Minister Modi met the Chairman of Nepal's Rastriya Swatantra Party, Rabi Lamichhane, on Wednesday and stressed that India looks forward to elevating the special, multifaceted partnership between the two countries.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri were among those present at the meeting between Modi and Lamichhane.

In a post on X, Modi said, "I welcome and fully share his desire to work closely together. Nepal is a priority partner under our Neighbourhood First policy and we look forward to collaborating with the new government."

Earlier on Tuesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah met the delegation led by Rabi Lamichhane, as both sides expressed their firm resolve to work together to enhance the special ties between the two countries.

The Home Minister congratulated Lamichhane on RSP's victory in the elections and conveyed India's best wishes.

Lamichhane also met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Jaishankar said their discussions focused on the India-Nepal partnership and people-to-people ties.

Lamichhane's visit to India is a part of the contacts between the political parties of the two countries.

Earlier, Nepal Prime Minister Balen Shah had said that India and Nepal have encroached on each other's territory.

Meanwhile, Indian Home Minister Amit Shah had ordered the clearing of all encroachments 15 km from the border. — ANI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Nepal's Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) President Rabi Lamichhane —PTI

NOIDA LABOUR UNREST

CPI(M) alleges assault, false cases against workers

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

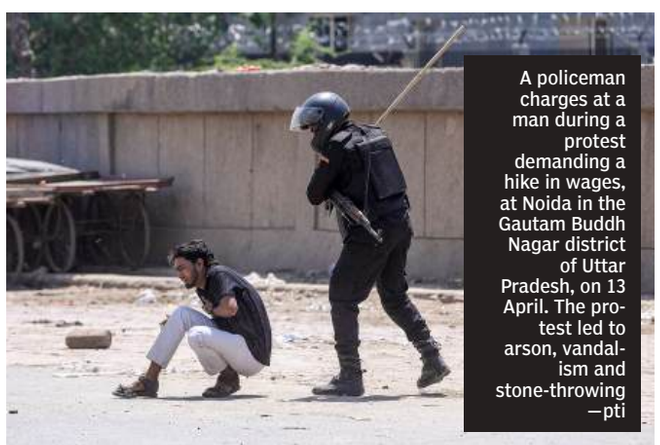
Workers arrested during the April labourers unrest in Noida allege they were physically assaulted in police custody, framed with fabricated evidence and booked under multiple charges to crush their movement, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) claimed on Wednesday after a party delegation met those recently released on bail after spending nearly a month in jail. Many have also been dismissed from their jobs following the protests.

The delegation, led by CPI(M) general secretary MA Baby, included CPI(M) Polit Bureau members R Arun Kumar and Tapan Sen, and Rajya Sabha member V Sivadasan.

Baby criticised the Uttar Pradesh government for what he described as police violence against workers and filing of false cases.

"For the last few days we have been trying to get permission through our Member of Parliament (MP) V Sivadasan to visit the workers in jail, but the authorities informed us that higher officials had rejected the request," Baby said.

He alleged that some jailed workers were unable to pursue bail applications or secure legal assistance, amounting to a denial of their fundamental rights.



A policeman charges at a man during a protest demanding a hike in wages, at Noida in the Gautam Buddh Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, on 13 April. The protest led to arson, vandalism and stone-throwing —pti

The delegation also interacted with workers from Fabstract Clothing, where around 50 employees reportedly joined the trade union movement following protests in April. Representatives of workers from Vibracoustic India also met them and alleged that managements routinely attempt to prevent workers from forming unions, while employees who assume leadership roles in such efforts are often dismissed.

The CPI(M) said it would continue to provide legal assistance and political support to the workers. The party said that the arrests, dismissals and restrictions faced by workers reflected continuing attacks on labour rights, and that workers' unity and collective resistance remained the strongest response to such actions. —PTI

Cong slams Arunachal CM over 'control' of files amid CBI probe

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Congress attacked the BJP on Wednesday, alleging the party was brazening it out in Arunachal Pradesh by allowing Chief Minister Pema Khandu to retain control over files subject to the Supreme Court-ordered CBI inquiry, calling his continuation an "insult" to the judiciary, the Constitution, and the people of his state.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleged that BJP has abandoned all principles and norms in the Khandu case, calling it an "insult" to the Supreme Court.

"The CM continues to be PWD minister. Therefore he has control over all files which are part of the CBI inquiry," he said. — PTI

Residents allege delay by Delhi fire services

Several jump from building in bid to escape; sealed windows, locked exits turn hotel into death trap

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Residents and eyewitnesses on Wednesday alleged that fire tenders reached the blaze site in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar late, claiming several lives could have been saved with a quicker response. The Delhi Fire Service, however, rejected the charge.

There was no moment to spare and the urgency was not lost on locals, who broke glass panes and rushed with blankets to help people escape an inferno that tore through a bed-and-breakfast building in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Wednesday.

Anjum, a resident opposite the building, said she first sensed trouble early in the morning. "We smelled something, then a spark occurred and the building caught fire. Fire brigades were called around 8 am, but they arrived late," she claimed.

Another resident said neighbourhood people led initial rescue efforts. "People used ropes and mattresses to help those trapped. We could not even stay inside due to heat and smoke," he said.

A Delhi Fire Service officer denied delays.

A foreign couple trapped on the fourth floor broke a window grill and tried to climb down using a pipe but fell; overhead wires broke the woman's fall.

The building, which has a basement, ground floor and five upper floors, housed a restaurant on the ground floor and a hotel above. Police sources said it had only one entry-exit and was operating beyond permitted capacity.

Officials said the fire began at the ground-floor eatery, though it was later clarified as a hotel premises. A first responder said the basement was initially locked and took over 20 minutes to open.

Visuals showed narrow lanes, hanging wires, and intense flames tearing through the structure, with debris and shattered glass scattered outside. Emergency teams from the fire services and the police carried out rescue operations, pulling victims from the basement and upper floors.

At Max Hospital across the road, relatives gathered, scanning lists and making frantic calls as injured and dead were brought in. —*Salar News*

Woman jumps from 3rd floor with child

A woman with her child in her arms jumped from the third floor of a hotel in Delhi's Malviya Nagar, eyewitnesses said.
The fire broke out on Wednesday at the Flourish Stay bed-and-breakfast hotel in Hauz Rani locality. As thick smoke engulfed the building and flames spread rapidly through the premises, several people were seen breaking window panes and calling for help. "A woman holding a young child jumped from the third floor after locals spread mattresses on the ground," an eyewitness said.
Witnesses said the woman landed on one of the mattresses along with the child. She was immediately sent to a hospital.—*PTI*

Police and firefighters at the site after a fire broke out at a bed-and-breakfast facility in a 5-storey building in Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Wednesday —*PTI*

—*AI*

AI helps Agra cops arrest loot suspect after 25 years

AGRA, 3 JUNE

A loot accused who had been absconding for nearly 25 years has been arrested by the police using AI tools to trace his whereabouts, an official said on Wednesday. Samuel was wanted in connection with a Rs 1.75 lakh loot committed in Agra area on 8 November, 2002, along with two associates. The police updated a 25-year-old photograph of him with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and searched across various social media platforms to identify possible matches. Using details obtained from a traffic challan in his wife's name, a police team travelled to Delhi and tracked him down. —*PTI*

Meerut man shoots son suspecting murder plot

MEERUT, 3 JUNE

Police probing the death of gunshot victim 23-year-old Tushar Tyagi have arrested his father, Sunder Tyagi, in the case regarding his death. Sunder Tyagi allegedly carried out the murder suspecting that his son had paid Rs 10 lakh to get him killed over a family dispute. Sunder Tyagi and his associate Amit alias Vedwan were arrested on Tuesday. During questioning, it emerged that Sunder Tyagi was travelling in the victim's vehicle at the time of the incident and allegedly shot Tushar Tyagi dead, later abandoning the body and fleeing. Officials said Sunder Tyagi has several criminal cases, including murder, registered against him. —*PTI*

Mizoram to issue liquor permit on medical grounds

AIZAWL, 3 JUNE

Dry state Mizoram will issue 'Red Card' permits, allowing people to consume India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) on medical grounds under the provisions of its amended prohibition Act, officials said on Wednesday. In a notification, the excise and narcotics department said the permits would be granted under Section 45B(1) of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2025, to eligible applicants whose health conditions warrant the possession and consumption of liquor. The permit will remain valid for a year on payment of Rs 5,000. In March 2025, the assembly amended the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 amid stiff opposition from opposition parties.—*PTI*

CBSE says 40K students completed re-evaluation

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Nearly 40,000 students have availed the verification and re-evaluation facility without any issues till Wednesday morning, the CBSE said.

The Board said the payment gateways of SBI, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda and Indian Bank are available on the Verification and Re-evaluation portal, adding that students are not required to have an account with these banks.

The portal was launched after some delay, with the CBSE having earlier said that applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer books were expected to begin by 29 May.

The Board said the facility is available only to those students who have obtained scanned copies of their evaluated answer books.

The portal will remain open from 2 June to 6 June midnight, and no offline applications or requests submitted after the deadline will be accepted.

Students will have to log in through the CBSE website using their Aadhaar number. The board said the process, including payment of fees, will be conducted digitally. For verification of issues in scanned answer books, students can report concerns like missing pages, missing supplementary sheets, missing maps or graphs, blurred pages, incorrect answer books or evaluation against a different question paper set.

The CBSE said once the 'freeze and proceed to payment' button is clicked, the details will be locked and cannot be edited. The board said applications will be treated as successfully submitted only after online payment is completed. The CBSE had said that Aadhaar-based verification has been introduced for security reasons while applying for verification of issues and re-evaluation of answers.

"For children who do not have Aadhaar, the Aadhaar details of parents, relatives or guardians may be used," the board said. —*PTI*

The portal will remain open from 2 June to 6 June midnight, and no offline applications submitted after the deadline will be accepted—*ANI*

Patna 'Khan Sir' coaching institute attacked, 3 held

PATNA, 3 JUNE

A coaching institute of educator Faisal Khan, popularly known as 'Khan Sir', was vandalised and stoned in Patna, police said on Wednesday. Three people were later arrested.

Khan initially claimed that firing took place at the institution, but police could not confirm it. However, he later said that investigation would find out what exactly happened.

The incident took place at the Khan Global Coaching Institute in the Kadamkuan police station area on Tuesday, police officials said.

Preliminary investigation and CCTV footage indicated that around 15 to 20 people associated with another Patna coaching institute were involved in the vandalism, it added.

Khan said, "Some anti-social elements from a nearby coaching centre created widespread damage, beat up our guard badly and fired shots. Their main angst is how can someone teach students at such a low cost and still deliver good results."

Police said physical assault took place but could not confirm the incident of firing based on CCTV footage.

On Wednesday morning, however, while responding to a reporter's query on firing, Khan said, "Once the probe report comes, we will know what happened. We are not sitting here prepared for a fight."

Meanwhile, the Patna Police arrested three people on Wednesday, including a coaching institute director, in connection with the firing outside Khan Sir's coaching centre.

The three were produced in court today and were subsequently sent to judicial custody. —*Agencies*

CCTV footage indicated that around 20 people connected to another Patna coaching centre were behind the attack—*SCREENGRAB*

SC sets up panel to review Aravalli definition

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The SC has constituted a high-powered committee to conduct an independent review of the Centre's report on the definition and delineation of the Aravalli Hill Range and directed the panel to address what it described as "critical ambiguities" in the findings.

The committee headed by Kanchan Devi, the Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), has been directed to submit a comprehensive report by 31 August.

The move comes months after the SC, on 29 December, stayed the implementation of an October 2025 report prepared by a committee chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

The court had then emphasised the need for an independent body of experts to undertake a fresh scientific assessment.

The new high-powered committee (HPC) will be chaired ex-officio by Kanchan Devi, a 1991-batch IFS officer.

The committee's members are Dr Subhash Ashutosh, former Director General of the Forest Survey of India; Dr Rajendra Kumar Sharma, former Director of the Geological Survey of India; Brij Mohan Singh Rathore, former Joint Secretary in the Environment Ministry; and Prof Ashok K Bhatnagar, former Head of the Department of Botany at Delhi University.

The HPC is tasked with examining several key questions arising from the October 2025 report. —*PTI*

The headed by Kanchan Devi, the DG of ICFRE, has been directed to submit a comprehensive report by 31 August —*ANI*

LENGTHY CASES RUIN MARRIAGES: SC

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Prolonged pendency of matrimonial litigation leads to only perpetuity of a marriage on paper, the Supreme Court said while dissolving the marriage of an estranged couple who were living separately for around 15 years.

The SC noted that the Rajasthan High Court had granted divorce for the husband on many grounds, including cruelty committed by the wife against him by denying sex.

"The HC's conclusion is sustained. The decree of divorce as granted by allowing the appeal of the respondent-husband is upheld," Justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih said.

It noted that denial of conjugal rights including refusal of sexual intercourse without reasonable cause constitutes mental cruelty and is a valid ground for divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act.

Exercising its powers under Article 142, the SC said the marriage between the couple deserves to be dissolved as it had broken down irretrievably. —*PTI*

Great Nicobar Project is pure biz; ecological havoc certain: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on Wednesday that the Great Nicobar Island Project is "overwhelmingly a commercial enterprise" and "ecological havoc" is assured as the unique biodiversity of the area will be endangered.

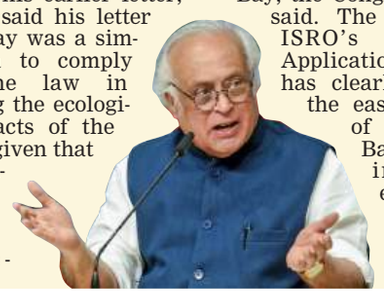
As he shot off another letter to Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav over the project, Ramesh said it was somewhat reassuring that democratic windows of engagement, howsoever ritualistic, still exist.

In his response to Yadav's 27 May letter which was a reply to his earlier letter, Ramesh said his letter on 10 May was a simple plea to comply with the law in assessing the ecological impacts of the project, given that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of March 2022 itself had stated that it was only a rapid reconnaissance study.

He said Yadav would be aware of the difference between primary data collected at the project site and its impact areas and secondary data collected from pre-existing studies.

Secondary data is just not a substitute for primary data collection and project-specific studies, Ramesh pointed out.

In the judgment dated 16 February 2026, para 46 records the submissions of the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change on the erosion status of Galathea Bay, the Congress leader said. The report of ISRO's Space Applications Centre has clearly marked the eastern flank of Galathea Bay in red, indicating erosion, Ramesh said. —*PTI*



FWICE withdraws complaint against Ranveer

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) on Wednesday said it has withdrawn the non-cooperative directive issued against Ranveer Singh over his exit from Farhan Akhtar's "Don 3" after the "Dhurandhar" star sent a legal notice to the organisation.

The decision was taken after an intervention by the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA), the Producers Guild of India (PGI) and Cine & TV Artistes' Association (CINTAA).

"We are withdrawing our non-cooperative directive from immediate effect after a request by IMPAA, the producers' guild and CINTAA. We have been told that we should all sit together with the producers' body and take an appropriate decision where neither the producers and directors nor the actor face any issues," Federation of Western India Cine Employeespresident BN Tiwari told reporters here.

"No one has won or lost in this matter. Our legal department will respond to his legal notice after examining it in detail," he added. —*PTI*

TARGETS WB CM

Bengali woman held after uploading beef cooking video

GURUGRAM, 3 JUNE

Gurugram police arrested a Bengali woman after she uploaded a video in which she claimed that she has cooked some beef for West Bengal's chief minister, police said on Wednesday.

Jyotsna Bibi, who is a resident of West Bengal's South Dinajpur district and was working as a domestic help in Gurugram's Chakkarpur area, was arrested for allegedly hurting religious sentiments. The police also seized her mobile phone.

Police said that on 30 May the Chakkarpur police chowki received information that a controversy had erupted over a video about beef.

The complainant, Dinesh Yadav, a resident of Chakkarpur village, showed an apparently taunting video in which a woman allegedly said, "I have cooked some beef just for you (West Bengal chief minister). You didn't let me perform the 'Qurbani' (sacrifice) this time around," she said.

Following the complaint, the police registered an FIR at the Sector 29 police station and arrested Bibi on 30 May. She was sent to judicial custody after being produced in a city court, they said.

On Tuesday, Bibi's lawyer filed a bail petition, but she was denied bail. Hearing the petition, Judicial Magistrate First Class Suman's court set 8 June for the next hearing, they added. —*PTI*

Kerala HC says Kumbh Mela girl major, grants bail to hubby

KOCHI, 3 JUNE

The Kerala High Court said on Wednesday that the young woman who shot to fame during the Prayagraj Kumbh Mela prima facie appears to be a major and granted transit bail of one month to her husband so that he can move a MP court to seek anticipatory bail in the kidnapping case against him. The girl's husband, Farman, is accused of kidnapping her in a case registered by the MP police on a complaint by her father, who has claimed that she is a minor.

However, Justice Kauser, after examining her birth certificate, said that it shows her date of birth as 1 January 2008 and so she is a major. —*PTI*

—ANI

Raúl Castro turns 95 as Cuba celebrates enigmatic figure

HAVANA, 3 JUNE

Raúl Castro turned 95 on Wednesday, marking a milestone for the former Cuban president and key figure of the 1959 revolution led by his brother, Fidel Castro. Born in Birán in 1931, Castro joined the struggle against dictator Fulgencio Batista, later becoming defence minister and a senior Communist Party leader. He succeeded Fidel as president in 2008 and served until 2018, overseeing limited economic reforms and a historic thaw in US-Cuba relations under Barack Obama. Although he retired from politics in 2021, Castro remains influential, holding military and parliamentary roles. Recently indicted by the US over the 1996 downing of civilian planes, he remains a divisive figure.—*PTI*

Ex-Thai PM freed early from parole after royal pardon

BANGKOK, 3 JUNE

Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Wednesday completed all obligations linked to his prison sentence after a royal pardon ended his four-month probation early. The decree, issued by King Maha Vajiralongkorn on the occasion of Queen Suthida's birthday, granted eligible convicts early release. Thaksin, 76, qualified as he had less than a year remaining on his sentence. The billionaire telecommunications tycoon and founder of the Pheu Thai movement served eight months of a one-year term for corruption-related offences. Originally sentenced to eight years in 2023, his term was reduced by the king. Ousted in a 2006 military coup, Thaksin remains one of Thailand's most influential and polarising political figures. —*PTI*

2 scientists charged for bringing mpox virus into US

DETROIT, 3 JUNE

Two scientists at a US government laboratory have been charged with smuggling vials of deactivated mpox virus into the United States from the Republic of Congo and lying to authorities during questioning at a Michigan airport. A federal criminal complaint names Vincent Munster, chief of the virus ecology section at Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Montana, and colleague Claude Kwe. The pair were stopped at Detroit Metropolitan Airport in January after travelling via Paris. Investigators said they failed to declare the biological samples or obtain required permits. Munster allegedly denied carrying any such material. The duo mpox researchers are due in federal court on Wednesday.—*PTI*

Pak forces kill 17 suspected terrorists in Balochistan

KARACHI, 3 JUNE

Pakistani security forces have killed 17 suspected terrorists in a series of intelligence-based operations across Balochistan following last week's deadly bomb attack on a shuttle train in Quetta.The 24 May suspected vehicle-borne suicide attack near a railway station killed at least 16 people, including three security personnel, and injured dozens. According to the military's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), operations were conducted in Mastung, Nushki, Zehri, Khuzdar and Kech districts. The military said the slain militants belonged to Fitna-al-Hindostan and were involved in numerous terrorist activities. Security forces recovered weapons, ammunition, explosives and ready-to-use improvised explosive devices. Search operations are continuing to locate any remaining militants. —*PTI*

Iranian drone attack hits Kuwait airport, 1 killed

Iran says stopped talking to mediators; Don claims talks on

DUBAI, 3 JUNE

Kuwait suspended flights on Wednesday after an Iranian drone strike heavily damaged the passenger terminal at Kuwait International Airport, killed one person and injured several others, in the latest escalation of tensions between Tehran and Washington.

Defence Ministry spokesperson Brig Gen Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi said a number of hostile drones targeted the airport's passenger building. State media reported that Kuwait Airways had suspended operations until further notice. The airport had reopened only on 1 June after being shut since February because of the Iran war.

The attack came hours after the US military launched strikes on an Iranian military facility in retaliation for Iranian missile attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain. According to the US military, two missiles fired at Kuwait broke apart mid-flight, while US and Bahraini forces intercepted missiles aimed at Bahrain. Bahrain said its military destroyed three missiles and several drones launched by Iran. Iran's Revolutionary Guard said it had targeted the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and another country, without naming Kuwait. Tehran said the strikes were retaliation for a US missile attack on an oil tanker attempting to reach Iran despite a US blockade.

State media reported that Kuwait Airways had suspended operations until further notice —*SCREENGRAB*

The US responded by striking an Iranian military ground-control station on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Meanwhile, uncertainty surrounded efforts to extend a ceasefire in the conflict involving Iran, the US and Israel. Iranian news agencies Fars and Tasnim reported that Tehran had halted communication with mediators, linking further negotiations to enforcement of a ceasefire in Lebanon.

. However, US President Donald Trump dismissed reports of a breakdown in talks, saying contacts with Iran were continuing. —*PTI*

UN Chief proposes options to help end Israel-Hezbollah war

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has proposed three options for maintaining a UN military presence along the Israel-Lebanon border after the 8,100-member UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon ends on 31 December.

The options, ranging from 5,525 to 1,980 personnel, would continue monitoring the Blue Line boundary, support deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and strengthen political efforts to implement a 2006 UN resolution aimed at ending the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

The Security Council voted in August 2025 to end the UNIFIL mission. Guterres said continued UN monitoring remained essential as hostilities persist despite a ceasefire. The Council is expected to decide soon. —*PTI*

Ukrainian drones set fire to oil terminal ahead of Putin visit

KYIV, 3 JUNE

Ukrainian long-range drones struck an oil terminal in St Petersburg and set it ablaze on Wednesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, in an embarrassing security breach ahead of President Vladimir Putin's appearance at the city's annual international economic forum.

The drones flew more than 1,000km to hit the facility, sending black smoke over the port area. Russian authorities confirmed an attack on infrastructure, while flights were briefly suspended and mobile internet services disrupted.

Zelenskyy said overnight strikes also targeted the Kronstadt naval base and a weapons manufacturing plant in the Tambov region. Ukraine has increasingly targeted Russian oil and military facilities to weaken Moscow's war effort.

The attack came a day after Russia launched a major drone and missile barrage on Kyiv and other cities, killing 22 civilians and injuring 138.

Russia said it downed 354 Ukrainian drones overnight, while Ukraine said it neutralised 189 of 198 Russian drones. In occupied Donetsk, a Ukrainian strike on a Moscow-Crimea bus killed seven and injured 11. Two firefighters were killed in Russia's Smolensk region. Russian attacks also killed civilians in Sumy and Kherson. —*PTI*

OVER FORCED LABOUR

The Commerce Ministry said India remains engaged with the US on the Section 301 proceedings —*FREEPIK*

US proposes 12.5% additional duties on India, 53 nations

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has proposed an additional 12.5 per cent duty on imports from India and 53 other countries for allegedly failing to prohibit and effectively enforce bans on goods produced with forced labour.

- The USTR said countries including India, China, Japan, Brazil, Australia, the UK and Saudi Arabia had failed to impose effective prohibitions on such imports.

The proposal follows Section 301 investigations launched in March into 60 economies over concerns related to forced labour and excess industrial capacity. At the centre of the dispute is the concept of a forced labour import prohibition, laws that prevent goods produced wholly or partly using forced labour from entering a country's market.

The USTR said countries including India, China, Japan, Brazil, Australia, the UK and Saudi Arabia had failed to impose effective prohibitions on such imports. Six economies — Canada, Ecuador, the European Union, Indonesia, Mexico and Pakistan — face a proposed 10 per cent tariff for failing to enforce existing bans.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said failure to address forced-labour imports created an uneven playing field for American workers. India has rejected the allegations and urged Washington to address the issue through ongoing bilateral trade negotiations.

The proposal comes as India and the US negotiate a bilateral trade agreement, with talks currently under way in New Delhi. The proposed tariffs could be used by Washington as leverage in the negotiations.

The Commerce Ministry said India remains engaged with the US on the Section 301 proceedings while also pursuing an interim trade agreement under a framework announced in February.

It said the tariffs are not final. —*PTI*

Sikh man's murder trial leads to anti-cop stir in UK

SOUTHAMPTON, 3 JUNE

Violent clashes erupted in UK's Southampton on Tuesday after the release of police body-camera footage showing officers handcuffing dying teenager Henry Nowak while his killer, Sikh man Vickrum Digwa, falsely claimed to be the victim of a racist attack.

Hundreds attended the protest, with some demonstrators pelting police with chairs, rocks, cans and flares. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood condemned the violence, accusing activists of hijacking a tragedy to fuel division and warning that those responsible would face the full force of the law.

The footage, released with the permission of Nowak's family after Digwa was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 21 years, shows the 18-year-old repeatedly telling officers he had been stabbed and could not breathe. One officer is heard responding: "Don't think you have, mate."

When police arrived at the scene in December, they initially treated Nowak as a suspect after Digwa, 23, claimed he had been racially assaulted. Officers later discovered Nowak's injuries and attempted to resuscitate him. The trial judge rejected claims that Nowak had made racist remarks.

The case has sparked a national debate on policing, race and knife crime. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was sickened by the footage and questioned how allegations of racism influenced police decision-making. The Independent Office for Police Conduct is investigating the officers' actions, while the National Police Chiefs' Council will review anti-racism guidance. Far-Right figures, including Reform UK leader Nigel Farage, have cited the case as evidence of "two-tier policing", a claim rejected by authorities. Some politicians have also called for restrictions on ceremonial Sikh blades after it emerged Digwa used a separate 8-inch dagger, rather than his kirpan, to kill Nowak. —*Agencies*

Henry Nowak and Vickrum Digwa
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

- The footage shows the 18-year-old Nowak repeatedly telling cops he had been stabbed by Digwa and could not breathe. However, the cops didn't believe him.

2 lakh H1B applicants paid $1,00,000 for entry to US

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

More than 2,00,000 applicants paid USD 1,00,000 each for expedited H1B visa processing in fiscal year 2026, US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Tuesday.

Mullin said the DHS had received about 286,000 H1B applications so far this fiscal year. Applications filed through the premium route are processed in around 15 days, compared with about seven-and-a-half months under the standard process.

The H1B programme remains one of the most sought-after US work visa routes for Indian technology professionals, engineers, healthcare workers and researchers. Mullin's testimony underscores growing pressure among applicants and employers to secure faster decisions, avoiding delays that can affect job start dates, project deployments and workforce planning.

The USD 1,00,000 fee, introduced under the Trump administration, applies to new H1B petitions for workers based outside the United States. Under US law, employers must bear the cost, significantly increasing overseas hiring expenses.

The impact has been particularly visible in India's IT sector. Amid tighter immigration rules and rising costs, the six largest Indian IT services firms, including TCS, Infosys and Wipro, saw their combined US H1B approvals fall nearly 40 per cent, from about 18,500 to just over 11,000. —*PTI*

FBI shoots bank hostage-taker

CALIFORNIA, 3 JUNE

A man who had taken hostages at a Chase Bank building in California — which also houses a school — was shot and killed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on Wednesday, police said. All hostages were released unharmed.

The suspect was killed in "an officer-involved shooting involving FBI personnel," the Bakersfield Police Department said in a statement.

The standoff in downtown Bakersfield began Tuesday afternoon when officers responded to a bomb threat at the Chase Bank building. The man allegedly barricaded himself inside with several members of the public and warned that explosives were present.

Livestreamer Jacob Davidson captured footage through a building window of a woman rocking back and forth Tuesday night before crouching below the sill. Two hands were later seen waving from the window.

A security perimeter around the building and nearby businesses was set up as negotiators spoke with the man.

Sergeant Eric Celedon said one hostage had been released safely through negotiations between police and the FBI, though others remained inside until the suspect was shot.

The FBI and Department Homeland Security were assisted by SWAT, bomb squad, K9, drones, and negotiation teams were deployed on site, ending with an FBI personnel fatally shooting the man. —*Agencies*

US bins $1.8B fund to aid Trump's allies

The Trump administration has abandoned plans for a controversial USD 1.8 billion "Anti-Weaponisation Fund" intended to compensate allies of President Donald Trump who claimed they were unfairly targeted by the justice system.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told lawmakers on Tuesday that the administration would not proceed with the fund following political backlash from both Republicans and Democrats and legal challenges in the courts. The proposal had sparked outrage over the possibility that participants in the 6 January 2021 Capitol riot could be eligible for compensation.

The fund was linked to a settlement of Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns. Republicans had threatened to withhold support for immigration enforcement funding unless the proposal was scrapped. —*PTI*

SOUTH ASIA TO BE HIT HARD

UN Chief warns of extreme weather amid El Nino

GENEVA, 3 JUNE

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged countries to take urgent climate action to tackle worsening extreme weather risks ahead of El Nino, a warming of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

Sharing a press statement issued by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Guterres said the climate phenomenon would intensify the impacts of global warming and increase the frequency of extreme weather events worldwide.

"The science is clear: El Nino is arriving on our doorstep in the coming months with 90 per cent certainty. The world must treat it as the urgent climate warning it is," Guterres said.

The WMO statement warned that above-average temperatures are expected across nearly all parts of the globe between June and August, increasing the risks of heat stress, the development of drought conditions and heavy rainfall in some areas.

It also highlighted that different regions will experience it differently. South Asia is expected to receive below-average monsoon rainfall this year. The Greater Horn of Africa could get "below-normal rainfall" during the "critical June-September rainy season" and the Central America region is expected to experience drier and warmer conditions.

The Greater Horn of Africa will get below-normal rainfall during the critical June-September rainy season —*ANI*

- UN Chief stressed that the only effective response was "ending the addiction to fossil fuels, accelerating the shift to renewables, protecting the most vulnerable.

Calling for immediate global action, the UN chief stressed that the only effective response was "ending the addiction to fossil fuels, accelerating the shift to renewables, protecting the most vulnerable, and delivering early warning systems for all." —*ANI*

BANGLADESH FOREIGN MINISTER ELECTED PRESIDENT OF 81ST SESSION OF UNGA

UNITED NATIONS, 3 JUNE

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman was on Tuesday elected as the President of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

In the closely-contested elections, the Bangladeshi diplomat garnered 99 votes while his opponent, Cyprus' Special Envoy for Multilateralism Andreas Kakouris, got 91 votes in his favour out of the 190 members present and voting. To be elected, the candidate required a simple majority of 96 votes.

"As a candidate from the Global South, I carry the aspirations of developing countries, but as President, I will be everyone's President," Rahman had said in his vision statement.

"This achievement reflects Bangladesh's increasing contribution and credibility on the global stage," Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman said in a post on X.

- In the closely-contested elections, the Bangladeshi diplomat garnered 99 votes while his opponent, Cyprus' Special Envoy for Multilateralism Andreas Kakouris, got 91 votes.

The election for President of the UNGA comes amid raging global conflicts, a deeply polarised UN Security Council and heightened scrutiny over the relevance of the 80-year global organisation. —*PTI*

Rupee falls 31P, closes at 95.67 against USD

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The rupee depreciated 31 paise to close at 95.67 (provisional) against the US Dollar on Wednesday, after the US Trade Representative proposed 12.5 per cent additional duties on Indian imports, citing labour violations. Forex traders said strong dollar demand, surging crude oil prices, geopolitical tensions, and relentless foreign capital outflows dented investor sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.43 against the US dollar, then touched an intraday low of 95.80 and finally ended the session at 95.67 (provisional), down 31 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee depreciated 17 paise to close at 95.36 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Gold drops Rs 1,850, silver down Rs 1,500

NEW DELHI, 20 MAY

Gold prices declined by Rs 1,850 to Rs 1.59 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid weakness in global markets and uncertainty over the US-Iran ceasefire agreement, leading to fears of prolonged high interest rates. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by Rs 1,850, or 1.14 per cent, to Rs 1,59,600 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 1,61,450 per 10 grams. Silver prices also slumped by Rs 1,500, or 0.55 per cent, to Rs 2,69,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 2,71,000 per kg in the previous session. *—PTI*

Microsoft Build unveils new AI reasoning model

SAN FRANCISCO, 3JUNE

At its annual developer conference, Microsoft Build, in San Francisco, Chairman and CEO of Microsoft Satya Nadella unveiled a proprietary reasoning model called MAI-Thinking-1. "It's a mid-sized, 35 billion active parameter model with a 256K context window built for high efficiency and performance, but importantly, at a low-token cost," Kyle Daigle, Microsoft's developer marketing chief and GitHub operating chief, wrote in a blog post. The move comes at a time when the AI battle is heating up with Anthropic and OpenAI preparing to go public. Microsoft executives signalled a shift in company strategy, focusing on autonomous AI agents. *—ANI*

Hiring down 6%, 4% for white-collar recruits: Report

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

India's white-collar hiring moderated in May, down 4 per cent year-on-year (YoY), despite a surge in diversity hiring, said a foundit Insights Tracker report on Wednesday. Overall white-collar hiring dropped 6 per cent month-on-month, indicating continued employer caution amid evolving market conditions. However, diversity hiring increased 21 per cent. Recruitment slowed across sectors like import & export, logistics & transportation, retail, and BFSI. Sectors like travel & tourism, automotive, healthcare & pharma, and real estate witnessed robust YoY hiring in May. The foundit Insights Tracker report is a monthly analysis of 7,39,188 online job posting activity. *—PTI*

Govt debunks reports of RBI selling gold worth $12B

Physical gold stocks stay at 880.52 tonne: RBI bulletin

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A news agency report, now debunked by the RBI, had claimed that the central bank had sold gold valued at around USD 12 billion over a two-week period ending 22 May *–AI*

Sources in the Finance Ministry on Wednesday denied media reports claiming that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has sold gold worth USD 12 billion to shore up India's foreign exchange reserves. RBI's latest Annual Report for 2025-26 shows that the central bank's gold holdings actually increased during the financial year, contradicting claims of a large-scale sale of the precious metal.

A news agency report had claimed that the central bank had sold gold valued at around USD 12 billion over a two-week period ending 22 May in an effort to protect the country's foreign exchange reserves amid pressure on the rupee and a rising import bill.

The RBI has denied the reports, stating, "it is clarified that the physical stock of gold is disclosed by RBI in its Monthly Bulletin," the central bank said. "The latest edition is available on the RBI website. The physical stock of gold remains unchanged at 880.52 tonnes as on date."

The data indicates that the RBI added to its gold reserves during FY26 rather than reducing them. The report further notes that of the total 880.52 metric tonnes of gold held by the central bank, 312.32 metric tonnes were maintained as assets of the Issue Department, while the remaining 568.20 metric tonnes were held under the Banking Department.

The RBI's annual accounts also reveal a significant increase in the value of its gold holdings, largely driven by a rise in global gold prices and depreciation of the Indian rupee against the US dollar. The value of gold held as an asset of the Banking Department rose by 63.6 per cent during FY26.

The annual report also shows that India's foreign exchange reserves remained robust, standing at USD 691.11 billion as of March 31, 2026, compared with USD 668.33 billion a year earlier. Gold reserves, including gold deposits, increased sharply in value terms to USD 115.40 billion from USD 78.18 billion in the previous year.

The RBI's audited balance sheet and reserve data clearly demonstrate that the central bank continues to maintain substantial gold holdings and that reports suggesting a USD 12 billion gold sale are not borne out by official records. *—ANI*

HSBC SERVICES PMI INDEX

Service sector hits six-month high in May

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India's services sector growth hit a six-month high of 59.8 in May, driven by healthy demand, new client wins, and rising new business intakes, the seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index showed on Wednesday — up from 58.8 in April and the strongest expansion since last November.

HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index is based on how business activity compares with the previous month. In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Strengthening demand for services such as freight, digital solutions, e-commerce, entertainment and IT reportedly boosted new business growth during May. As a result, companies increased activity to a greater extent and continued to add to payrolls.

However, growth of external demand remained below the 2025 average, the survey said, adding that the expansion in international orders was nevertheless solid, with firms citing gains from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the UAE and the UK.

On the prices front, input costs across the services sector rose at an above-trend pace in May, with firms reporting higher expenditure on food, fuel, gas, labour, and materials compared to April.

The HSBC Index has continued to recover from March's slowdown, rising from 58.2 in April to 59.3 in May. Composite PMI indices are weighted averages of comparable manufacturing and services PMI indices. *—PTI*

Cabinet clears ₹ 10,000 cr ATF fund for airlines

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Union cabinet on Wednesday approved a Rs 10,000 crore aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price stabilisation programme to cushion airlines from soaring fuel costs.

The scheme will provide interest-free advances up to Rs 10,000 crore to state-oil companies (OMCs), enabling them to supply ATF to Indian airlines at a stabilised price for domestic and international operations.

The mechanism comes as international ATF prices have surged to about Rs 142 per litre in May from Rs 60.50 in March, on airlines at a time when fuel accounts for nearly 40 per cent of operating costs and, in some cases, as much as 60 per cent during periods of extreme geopolitical volatility.

Under the arrangement, OMCs will be compensated whenever international import parity prices exceed an established benchmark level. Any support extended to OMCs will be recovered once global fuel prices moderate, with proceeds returned to the Consolidated Fund of India through a defined true-up process. I&B Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** said the budgetary support will help airlines in case of a rise in ATF prices. *—PTI*

DRAGGED BY IT, OIL PRICES

Sensex drops over 300 pts, Nifty by 77 pts

MUMBAI, 3 MAY

Sensex and Nifty closed lower on Wednesday after a day's breather, dragged by heavy selling in IT stocks, a fresh spike in crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 303.67 points, or 0.41 per cent, to settle at 74,346.17. During the day, it tanked 1,157.24 points, or 1.55 per cent, to 73,492.60. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 77.95 points, or 0.33 per cent to end at 23,405.60.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services tumbled 8.43 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra (6.23 per cent), HCL Tech (5.25 per cent) and Infosys (3.82 per cent). ITC, Eternal, Larsen & Toubro and Bajaj Finance were also among the laggards.

InterGlobe Aviation, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and Trent were among the gainers in the blue-chip pack.

"Markets opened under pressure as geopolitical concerns, elevated crude oil prices, and a sharp sell-off in IT stocks," Hariprasad K, at Livelong Wealth, said.

On Tuesday, Sensex climbed 382.50 points, or 0.52 per cent, to settle at 74,649.84. The Nifty rose by 100.95 points, or 0.43 per cent, to end at 23,483.55.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 3 per cent to USD 98.92 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 8,362.92 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. *—PTI*

Crude oil futures hit record₹9,260

Gold prices declined by Rs Crude oil prices surged by Rs 310 to a fresh record high of Rs 9,260 per barrel in futures trade on Wednesday, tracking strong gains in global benchmarks amid escalating tensions in West Asia. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), June crude oil contract climbed by Rs 310, or 3.46 per cent, to an all-time high of Rs 9,260 per barrel. *—PTI*

QR on grain bags: Centre to track FCI foodgrains, curb recycling

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Centre has decided to expand its QR tagging initiative for Food Corporation of India (FCI) foodgrain bags, with plans to implement the system in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha, in the ongoing marketing season.

Following a successful pilot in Andhra Pradesh and Punkab the move aims to track the end-to-end movement of foodgrains and prevent the recycling of grain bags Under the expanded pilot, approximately 10 lakh tonnes of rice will be moved with QR tagging from milling points in Andhra Pradesh to distributing states, while Telangana and Odisha will account for 5 lakh tonnes each.

The QR tagging system enables authorities to trace each bag back to its procurement centre, the agency that procured it, and the season it belongs to, said officials. Bags are scanned randomly at godowns during storage, and again at fair-price shops at the point of distribution.

In an additional step, the electronic point-of-sale (ePoS) device at fair price shops, also known as ration shops, will capture the QR code to enable the auto-generation of bills, thus streamlining subsidy dispursal

The initiative is expected to bring greater accountability into the Public Distribution System. *—PTI*

M'rashtra govt buys Mumbai's iconic AI building for ₹ 1,601 cr

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The Maharashtra government has acquired the Air India building, a defining feature of the south Mumbai skyline known for its prime sea-facing location, for Rs 1,601 crore.

The transfer of agreements between Air India Assets Holding Company and the state's Public Works Department (PWD) was completed in the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at on Tuesday, an official release said.

The Maharashtra government, facing an office space crunch in prime South Mumbai near the secretariat, had been in talks since at least 2021 for the acquisition.

The deal moved closer to completion in April this year with the Finance Department transferring Rs 1,600 crore to the PWD for finalising agreements, aiming to consolidate government offices in the over 45,000 sqm structure. At a review meeting held after the handover, PWD Minister Shivendrasinh Bhosale directed officials to conduct a comprehensive structural audit and undertake all necessary repairs before relocating government offices to the newly owened premises.

The minister said the building's main entrance should be redesigned to reflect Maharashtra's heritage. *—PTI*

UK orders Google to allow publishers to opt-out of AI summary use

LONDON, 3 JUNE

UK competition watchdog has imposed new requirements on Google, allowing publishers to block their content from being used by the search crawler to display on AI summaries, according to a Reuters report.

The AI summaries displayed by Google have been a huge problem for publishers who have seen their click-through rates drop significantly.

Content rawling is a process where a bot downloads data directly from a website.

The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) designated the company with strategic market status in a general search last year, enabling the regulator to impose targeted rules on trust and transparency.

Under the new regime, the tech giant will have to properly display attribution stating the source of the content on its AI summaries. The regulator believes the new requirements will give publishers greater control over their content and stronger bargaining power.

Google has said it is testing changes that allow publishers to decide what content appears in AI overviews.

Google accounts for over 90 per cent of search queries in Britain, and its search crawler uses publisher content for AI overviews and training, including for Gemini. *—ANI*

INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

CEOs quit insurance firms to launch startups

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A growing trend of general insurance CEOs leaving to pursue entrepreneurial ventures points to untapped investment potential in the sector, with several seasoned executives finding backing from private equity.

For instance, **Neelesh Garg**, former MD & CEO of Tata AIG General Insurance, has co-founded Kiwi General Insurance alongside US-based private equity firm WestBridge Capital. WestBridge holds approximately 70 per cent of the entity, with Garg holding a 30 per cent stake.

Similarly, HDFC Ergo General Insurance MD and CEO Anuj Tyagi quit to pursue entrepreneurial aspirations. Meanwhile, Anup Rau stepped down in March this year from the position of MD and CEO of Generali Central Insurance after a seven-year tenure that saw the company navigate a full ownership restructure, a JV with Central Bank of India, and a subsequent brand transition.

The emerging digital distribution infrastructure — Bima Sugam and the UPI-era shift in customer access — is beginning to reshape the economics of the business fundamentally

Regulatory changes introduced by the IRDAI have eased doing business and made the insurance sector more investor-friendly. India's general insurance sector remains structurally underpenetrated, and the regulator has signalled openness to new entrants, said a senior official at a private sector insurance company.

"Private equity firms recognise that capital alone cannot unlock this market; turning opportunity into enterprise requires the credibility only seasoned operators bring. Veteran CEOs come with established regulator relationships, distribution trust, and underwriting expertise—assets that could take a new institution a decade to build," said Apiary Consulting Managing Partner Hariharan Ramakrishnan. *—PTI*

–FREEPIK

Wipro CEO Pallia takes home ₹49.6 crore in FY26

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Wipro Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director **Srinivas Pallia** drew a total remuneration of USD 5.29 million (approximately Rs 49.64 crore) in the financial year 2025-26, according to the company's annual report.

Pallia's total compensation of USD 5,290,568 included USD 1.65 million in salary and allowances, USD 1.05 million in commission and variable pay, USD 2.47 million in other benefits, and USD 108,464 in long-term compensation. He is entitled to a commission at the rate of 0.35 per cent on incremental consolidated net profits of the company over the previous fiscal year, the report said.

Pallia took the helm of Wipro as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director in April 2024, taking the charge from Thierry Delaporte.

His remuneration places him between his peers at rival IT majors Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Infosys CEO and MD Salil Parekh drew a total remuneration of Rs 82.60 crore in FY26 while TCS CEO and MD K Krithivasan took home Rs 28 crore in 2025-26. *—PTI*

Tamil Nadu seeks Centre's backing to host 2029 NG

CHENNAI, 3 JUNE

Tamil Nadu has expressed its interest in hosting the 2029 National Games as part of a larger plan to strengthen sports infrastructure and position the State as one of India's leading sporting destinations.The proposal was submitted in New Delhi on Wednesday by Tamil Nadu Minister for Public Works, Highways and Sports Development Aadhav Arjuna during a meeting with Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya.The State government said hosting the National Games would create a lasting infrastructure legacy and help expand Tamil Nadu's sporting ecosystem. The proposal also highlighted the State's experience in hosting major national and international sporting events.As part of its larger sports development plan.—*PTI*

England aim to erase Ashes scars against NZ

LONDON, 3 JUNE

The past is fiercely protected at Lord's Cricket Ground. The Long Room, the slope of the field, the bell before play, dress codes and honours boards. But inside this normally comforting time capsule, England will try to escape its recent past when it begins its first home test of the year against New Zealand on Thursday. England aim to erase Ashes scars against New Zealand. An occasion that should herald a fresh start is enveloped by a stench of dissatisfaction lingering from England's humiliating tour to Australia. A team that was groomed for two years to end Australia's grip on the Ashes was crushed in 11 days before Christmas, tied for the quickest Ashes series defeat in 104 years.—*PTI*

India routs Singapore 25-0 to top Pool A in Women's U18 AC

KAKAMIGAHARA, 3 JUNE

Already through to the semifinals, India produced a sensational display of attack to thrash Singapore 25-0 in their final Pool A match of the Women's U18 Asia Cup here. The emphatic victory on Tuesday ensured India finished the pool stage with an all-win record and topped Pool A on their way to the semifinals. India's attacking depth was on full display as 10 different players registered their names on the scoresheet, led by Nousheen Naz, who struck seven goals (8', 13', 17', 18', 40', 52', 58'). Geethasri Nammi, who was named Player of the Match—*PTI*

Leclerc signs new multiyear deal with Ferrari in F1

MARANELLO, 3 JUNE

Charles Leclerc has signed a new contract with Ferrari "for the coming seasons," the Formula 1 team announced Wednesday The 28-year-old Leclerc has driven for Ferrari since 2019, having joined its academy in 2016. Only Michael Schumacher has had more F1 races for Ferrari than Leclerc, who also ranks second for most pole positions for the team. He is yet to win a driver's title, though. Leclerc said he "couldn't be happier to continue this journey" with Ferrari. Together we've shared incredible moments and some tougher ones, he said in a statement. The announcement comes ahead of his home grand prix at Monaco this weekend.—*PTI*

Shnaider knocks out World No. 1 Sabalenka

Jakub beat Joao to set up Zverev's last-four clash

PARIS, 3 JUNE

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka wasted a lead of a set and two breaks to lose 3-6, 7-5, 6-0 to Diana Shnaider in the French Open quarterfinals on Wednesday.

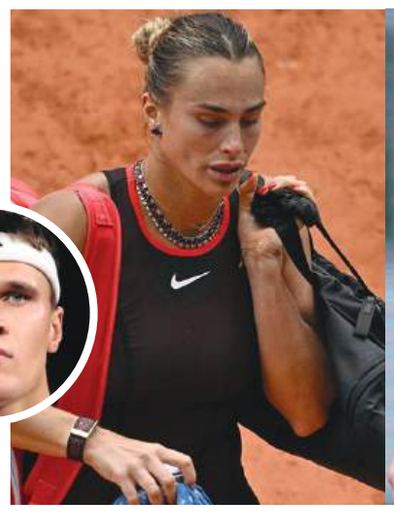
The four-time major winner Sabalenka led 4-1 in the second set and was two points from victory when serving for the match at 5-4 before completely collapsing against a player appearing in her first Grand Slam quarterfinal. Sabalenka stood still and screamed after losing a point to fall 0-30 down in the sixth game of the decider, and although she saved two match points at 0-40 down, she lost the match when she sent a shot into the net.

Sabalenka showed similar nerves when she lost in last year's final to Coco Gauff.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Maja Chwalinska extended her remarkable French Open run by beating No. 22-seeded Anna Kalinskaya 7-6 (3), 6-3.

Jakub Mensik (26), 20, beat 19-year-old João Fonseca (28) 6-4, 6-3, 7-6(3) in a thrilling night-session clash between two rising stars.

Men's singles tournament favourite Alexander Zverev (2) faces Menšík in the semis after a straight-sets win against Rafael Jodar (27) in Paris. Mirra Andreeva (8) plays Marta Kostyuk (15) in the women's singles last four after they beat Sorana Cirstea (18) and Elina Svitolina (7) respectively.



Aryna Sabalenka lose 3-6, 7-5, 6-0 to Diana Shnaider –*X/@FRENCHOPEN*

Balaji and Demoliner bow out

Indian tennis player N Sriram Balaji and his Brazilian partner Marcelo Demoliner saw their impressive French Open men's doubles campaign end in the quarterfinals after a straight-sets defeat to the second-seeded pair of Harri Heliövaara and Henry Patten.

The Indo-Brazilian duo lost 3-6, 4-6 in a match that lasted one hour and 17 minutes at the court Simonne-Mathieu.

Despite the loss, Balaji and Demoliner can take pride in a memorable tournament run. They had reached the quarterfinals after upsetting sixth-seeded Germans Kevin Krawietz and Tim Pütz 7-5, 6-4 in the third round.

For Balaji, the quarterfinal appearance represents one of the best Grand Slam performances of his career and a significant achievement for him on the doubles circuit.

Arnav Paparkar lost in the boys' singles third round, while Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi lost in the girls' singles second round.

Paparkar's challenge is still alive in the boys' doubles. With his Thai Partner Kunanan Pantaratorn, the Indian is set to take on top seeds Luis Guto Miguel from Brazil and Ziga Sesko from Slovenia.

Maja continues to run into the semifinals

Sriram Balaji and Demoliner –*X/@FRENCHOPEN*

Maja Chwalinska extended her remarkable French Open run by beating No. 22-seeded Anna Kalinskaya 7-6 (3), 6-3 on Wednesday to reach the semifinals. The unseeded Chwalinska came through three qualifying rounds to become only the second Polish woman to reach the semifinals at Roland Garros, along with four-time champion Iga Swiatek. Kalinskaya's wild shot at the net gave Chwalinska a match point, and she converted it when Kalinskaya's big forehand from the back of the court went out. The 24-year-old Chwalinska put her hand over her mouth and then her face in her hands in near disbelief.

"I honestly don't know what's going on. Every single match here is kind of crazy for me," she said. "I was definitely nervous. I'm stressed, of course, but I try and focus on my job, on my game."

Chwalinska had never been beyond the second round at any major before this tournament.

"I'm playing against the best players in the world," she said. "I won't compare myself to them." —*PTI*

AFGHANISTAN IN ONE-OFF TEST

BCCI asks Rohit, Hardik to reach Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

India is set to take on Afghanistan in a one-off Test and a series of three ODI matches. While the red-ball game is scheduled to begin on 6 June, the one-dayers are set to start on 13 June.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has already announced the squads for the two formats. In ODIs, two players, Hardik Pandya and Rohit Sharma, have been kept in the squad, but their participation in the games will be subject to fitness clearance, informed the Board.

Hardik is set to reach the BCCI Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru and is expected to spend a week there before joining his India teammates for the ODI series against Afghanistan.

Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna bowled at full tilt for close to 25 minutes despite oppressive heat here on Wednesday as India's preparations gathered pace ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan.

Auqib, Zeeshan in India nets ahead of Afghan Test

Jammu and Kashmir seamer Auqib Nabi Dar, whose non-selection in the Indian Test squad invited widespread criticism, has been summoned by the team management along with six others to bowl in the nets ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting 6 June. Besides Auqib, wiry UP leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari, who plays for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, has also been asked to bowl in the nets as the Afghanistan team is expected to have a few wrist spinners. "Yes, Auqib Nabi has been asked to join the India nets. It is not just Auqib, but six others have also been called to join the India nets.

Shahidi's biggest test

When Afghanistan take on India in a one-off Test beginning Saturday, Hashmatullah Shahidi will be more than just the captain of the visiting cricket team.

The 31-year-old would also be the batting fulcrum around whom Afghanistan's Test ambitions revolve.

In the absence of veterans Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi, the soft-spoken left-hander will shoulder the responsibility of proving that Afghanistan's red-ball aspirations are no longer dependent on a handful of superstar names. It is a role that would have made his father proud. Shahidi's father, a physics teacher and author of multiple textbooks, values education above everything else. —*PTI*

Indonesia Open 2026: Ayush Shetty moves to pre-quarterfinals

JAKARTA, 3 JUNE

Young Indian shuttler Ayush Shetty came from behind to pull off a dramatic victory and advance to the pre-quarterfinals at the Indonesia Open here on Wednesday.

Shetty, ranked 20th, battled for 66 minutes before registering an 8-21, 22-20, 21-15 win over World No. 15 Hong Yang Weng of China in the opening round of the Super 1000 tournament.

After being outplayed in the first game, the 21-year-old Indian produced a spirited fightback, overturning an 11-15 deficit in the second game with a series of superb rallies to force a decider.

The Badminton Asia Championships silver medallist looked in complete control in the third game as he sealed his place in the second round, where he will face Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu.

Elsewhere, HS Prannoy suffered a first-round exit after losing to Ireland's Nhat Nguyen in a hard-fought three-game encounter.

After dropping the opening game 17-21, Prannoy bounced back to take the second 21-16 but failed to maintain the momentum, going down 19-21 in the decider.

In mixed doubles, World No. 41 pair Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Gadde progressed to the second round with a comfortable 21-14, 21-14 victory over Chinese Taipei's Po-Hsuan Yang and Ling Fang Hu. —*PTI*

S8UL ESPORTS

Gurashish, Prateek qualify for AG 2026

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

S8UL Esports' fighting game athletes Gurashish Singh (Soul) and Prateek Bhaunt (B Haunt) have officially qualified to represent India in Tekken 8 and Street Fighter 6, respectively, at the Asian Games 2026.

The duo earned their spots after winning their respective events at the National Esports Championships 2026 (NESC 2026), the official qualification tournament for India's esports contingent at the Games.

Soul, who previously represented India at the BRICS Esports Tournament 2025, emerged as the national champion in Tekken 8, while B Haunt secured top honours in Street Fighter 6 to book their places on Team India. Their success marks another significant milestone for India's growing fighting game community and reflects the impact of S8UL's investment in grassroots talent development. Both players joined the organisation through the S8UL Gauntlet, a first-of-its-kind fighting games talent hunt program designed to identify, support, and develop some of India's most promising players. Speaking on his qualification, Gurashish Singh aka Soul said, "Representing India at the Asian Games is something every athlete dreams of. I've had the opportunity to wear the Indian jersey before at the BRICS Esports Tournament, but qualifying for the Asian Games is on a completely different level. The support I've received through S8UL's Fighting Games Talent Hunt Program has played a huge role in my journey. —*PTI*

IRAN WC SQUAD TO REACH MEXICO EARLY SUNDAY

MEXICO, 3 JUNE

Iran's World Cup squad will arrive early on Sunday in Mexico, where the players will be based for the duration of the global football tournament.

"The Iran national football team will depart Antalya for Tijuana at 15:20 (1220 GMT) on Saturday, 6 June, and is scheduled to arrive in Mexico at 1:30 am (0730 GMT) on Sunday, June 7," a team statement said on Wednesday.

The Iranian players, who have been at a training camp in the southern Turkish resort of Antalya since May 18, are still waiting for their US visas.

The 2026 World Cup, which is being jointly hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada, runs from 11 June to 19 July.

Iran has been drawn in Group G and will play New Zealand and Belgium in Los Angeles on 15 and 21 June, followed by a game against Egypt in Seattle on 26 June.

The U.S. military began bombing Iran alongside Israel on 28 February, sparking war, although the hostilities were halted by an April 8 ceasefire. —*PTI*

NORWAY CHESS: PRAGGNANANDHAA BEATS CARLSEN

OSLO, 3 JUNE

Young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa dealt another stunning blow to hometown hero and world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, defeating the Norwegian in a classical game for the second time at Norway Chess 2026 and boosting his bid to become the first Indian champion of the prestigious event.

World champion D. Gukesh's title hopes ended after another heavy Round 8 defeat to French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja, leaving him bottom of the table on eight points and still unable to halt a worrying run of form since his 2024 world title triumph.

In a remarkable achievement in the elite double round-robin event, Praggnanandhaa became the only player to beat Carlsen twice in classical games this year, underlining his growing stature.

With two rounds still to play, the win pushed 20-year-old Praggnanandhaa up to third place on 12 points, with Alireza second on 13 and American GM Wesley —*PTI*

RANKIREDDY'S SHOULDER INJURY

Satwik-Chirag withdraw from Singapore Open

JAKARTA, 3 JUNE

Star Indian men's doubles shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Wednesday pulled out of the Indonesia Open mid-way into their opening round match after a shoulder issue troubled the former.

India's Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy retired from their men's doubles first-round match against Malaysia's Aaron Tai and Kang Khai Xing in the Indonesia Open 2026 on Wednesday.

"Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have withdrawn from the POLYTRON Indonesia Open 2026 due to the former's injury," the Badminton Association of India (BAI) said in a statement.

"The pair will now focus on recovery and rehabilitation as they prepare for the important tournaments ahead. We wish Satwik a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing the duo back on court soon," the statement added.

Last week, the Indian duo claimed their first title in two years by winning the Singapore Open.

The 25-year-old from Amalapuram, known for one of the fastest smashes in world badminton, has often struggled with his right shoulder.

The pair had withdrawn from the Badminton Asia Championship and the Swiss Open earlier this year as well due to Satwik's shoulder injury. —*PTI*

ARTIST SUING FIFA OVER DESTRUCTION OF DALLAS WHALE MURAL BEFORE WC

NEW YORK, 3 JUNE

The artist who painted a giant mural on a building in downtown Dallas of life-sized swimming whales has filed a $25 million lawsuit against soccer's international governing body and others, saying they illegally painted over his work to promote the city's upcoming World Cup matches.

The artist Wyland says he hand-painted the sprawling mural that covered roughly 17,000 square feet (1,580 square meters) across two of the building's walls.

The mural stood for nearly three decades before workers began painting over it last month, causing an uproar among residents who admired the mural's grand scale and

message of ocean conservation. The area's World Cup organising committee said in a statement that, in place of Wyland's mural, a new artwork is planned "that captures this current historical moment and reflects the energy, unity, and global spirit surrounding the World Cup 2026." It said a portion of Wyland's mural would be preserved. —*PTI*